

# Opioid substitution treatment pathway: for patients no longer able to take oral maintenance methadone in last days /weeks of life.

**NB** Keep maintenance methadone completely separate from analgesics

## Pain control

- Treat patient's pain as if not taking any opioids (which includes methadone)

## Unable to swallow oral opioids for pain control in last days/weeks of life

- Syringe driver is required for subcutaneous opioids
  - See conversion chart
- **Separate syringe driver chart** for pain and symptom control
- **Anticipatory drugs**
  - Keep in safe repository

## Methadone maintenance

- Usual oral methadone dose

## Unable to swallow oral methadone in last days/weeks of life

- Switch to subcutaneous (sc) methadone
- **Calculation**  
Half oral methadone dose to get sc dose  
e.g. **oral methadone 40mg divide by 2 = 20mg methadone sc** over 24hours)
- **Diluent is 0.9% normal saline**
- **Separate** syringe driver chart for subcutaneous methadone prescription

## Practicalities for injectable methadone, opioids and anticipatory drugs

- **Safekeeping, storage & governance of CDs**
- **Access to drugs**
- **Prescriber**
- **Education for healthcare professionals**  
*See local policies for your area*

## Safekeeping, storage and governance of injectable methadone/opioids

- **Patient's home**
  - safe repository/ locked box
- **Organisation Spectrum**
  - Changing lives" (York)
  - North Yorkshire Horizons (North Yorkshire)
- **Safe required-** for injectable medication
- Injectable medication will be managed by community health professionals

## Where to access injectable methadone?

- Community pharmacy (ring palliative care for named pharmacies)
  - methadone and anticipatory drugs
- Hospital pharmacy (in emergency)

## Who can prescribe injectable methadone?

- Doctors in "Spectrum"- NMP can continue methadone prescription
- Palliative medicine consultant
- **Recommend only one prescriber** for injectable methadone

## References

- Clinical guidelines on drug misuse and dependence. UK guidelines on clinical management. Update 2017 DoH
- Palliative care formulary
- PCF 6
- Methadone guidelines York Hospitals NHSFT- revising